January 15, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: Academic Council
FROM: Provost Kim Wilcox
RE: School of Music to College of Music

In April, 2006, I requested consultation from the Executive Committee of Academic Governance regarding a shift in the School of Music from a unit within the College of Arts and Letters to an autonomous unit, the College of Music.

During fall semester, 2006, the standing committees of Academic Governance considered the proposal, and to date, have indicated support for the change. The attached summary document is provided as background for the consideration of endorsement by Academic Council.

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Summary of the Request from the
School of Music, College of Arts and Letters
to Become an Autonomous College of Music

The School of Music is a highly interdisciplinary unit made up of distinct divisions as follows: a performance division in both classical and jazz traditions including administrative areas in brass and percussion, conducting (choral, orchestral, and wind), jazz studies, piano, strings, voice, and woodwinds; an academic division including administrative areas in composition, music education, music therapy, musicology/ethnomusicology, music theory; and a significant outreach division, the Community Music School. The School of Music has approached its planned target enrollment goals from approximately 320 majors in 1990 to 653 at present. Correspondingly, the size and quality of the yearly applicant pool has increased causing the admissions process to become more selective. The School currently serves approximately 1,800 non-majors through courses and ensembles each year, and provides instruction for approximately 1,600 individuals through the Community Music School.

The mission of the Michigan State University School of Music is to provide the highest quality professional instruction; to instill in students a dedication and desire to achieve excellence and understanding in all aspects of their musical education; to develop their abilities to the highest professional standards; to expand cultural awareness and diversity; to provide access for comprehensive non-degree instruction; to participate in community, state, regional, national and international arenas through service, teaching, research and performance; and to support an excellent faculty vitally engaged in significant research, scholarly and creative endeavors.

**Rationale for Autonomy**

The rationale for the School of Music becoming an autonomous unit is grounded in the faculty's belief that this organizational identity will provide flexibility to advance excellence in the musical academic and performance arts in a highly competitive national environment. Data indicate that generally, the strongest schools have a direct reporting relationship to the Provost. The last national music rankings (*US News and World Report, Graduate Rankings, 1997*) placed the MSU School of Music in the top 30 in the nation. With incremental investment since that time, the School has strengthened considerably and has developed additional programs of distinction.

The great majority of the finest schools of music are either free standing schools/conservatories or are colleges or schools in a university and report directly to the Provost (90% of the top 10, 85% of the top 20, 73% of the top 30, 68% of the top 40, and 64% of the top 50). The reasons for this autonomous
status, (including those that distinguish the MSU School of Music from other disciplines in the College of Arts and Letters) include the following:

- The School of Music is a professional school.
- The School of Music has held professional accreditation since 1934.
- The School of Music is a limited-enrollment unit with an admissions process that is unique within our College; it requires an entrance audition on a specific instrument/voice and admission to the School as well as admission to the University.
- Majors within the School of Music begin in the first semester of the freshman year rather than in the junior year.
- The undergraduate curricula in the School of Music are significantly different from curricula in Arts and Letters and other undergraduate degrees. Accreditation and certification issues cause several primary music degree programs in music to exceed the 120 credit norm.
- The teaching model is very different from Arts and Letters with significant variability; many faculty having a teaching assignment ranging from 18 to 23 contact hours of applied teaching; others have applied teaching assignments of up to 10 applied contact hours plus up to three classes. This contrasts markedly with predominant Arts and Letters faculty loads of 2 + 2.
- Significant and broad outreach and engagement efforts exist throughout the state with a particular focus in Detroit.
- Our alumni associate primarily with the School of Music, which has its own MSU Alumni Association charter.

**Impact on Students**

The School of Music has consulted widely with our graduate and undergraduate majors to seek their opinion regarding the impact a change from a School within a College to an autonomous College reporting directly to the Office of theProvost might have on them. A wide variety of students with whom we spoke — both graduate and undergraduate — unanimously support this change. Many of our graduate students come from Schools and Colleges of Music with this administrative structure and wish to see this change align with institutions from which they graduated (e.g., University of Michigan, Northwestern, University of North Texas, University of Southern California, Eastman School of Music, University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music, University of Southern California, Florida State University, and others). They stated that this would
better align the external perception of music at Michigan State with the reality of its excellent quality.

The School of Music faculty believes the future of the performing musical arts on the MSU campus and beyond, is very promising. We are committed to being a part of the University community in every sense, and through our outreach activities we will continue to be an integral part of MSU's land grant mission. We believe that through autonomy, the School of Music will best be able to realize its full potential and better serve the University as a whole.